

By Stephen Coates

http://www.google.com/hostednews/afp/article/ALeqM5gOzktbjytGwSVCUwDrSXckH_4CjA

The **US Commission on International Religious Freedom**, a non-partisan body that advises the US government, said the ruling may embolden religious extremists and foster sectarian strife.

"Hopefully, the Indonesian government will recognise that overturning the blasphemy decree advances its fight against terrorism and extremism, and enhances its reputation for religious tolerance and pluralism," commission chairman Leonard Leo said.

The law -- which effectively outlaws blasphemy as well as heresy -- was used in 2008 to force followers of the Islamic Ahmadiyah sect to go underground and is often cited by minorities as a source of discrimination and intimidation.